



**Norfolk and
Colebrook Public
Schools**

**Proposed
Regionalization
Plan**

**A Report of the Findings and
Recommendations
Of the Regionalization
Study Committee for the
Connecticut State
Board of Education**

June 6th, 2015

Norfolk and Colebrook Regionalization Plan

Table of Contents

Relevant Connecticut Statutes.....	3
History, Process and Overview	5
The Educational Plan	9
Facilities and Transportation.....	18
Governance and Legal	21
Budgets and Fiscal.....	24
Transition Planning.....	31
Terms and Definitions	32

- Relevant Connecticut Statutes -

§ 10-43. Reports to towns. Dissolution of committee

(a) The committee shall, at least semiannually, make progress reports to the participating towns and the State Board of Education in such manner as the committee deems suitable. Upon completion of its study, the committee shall present a written report of its findings and recommendations to the State Board of Education and the town clerk of each participating town. If the committee finds that establishment of the proposed regional school district is inadvisable, its report shall include such findings and an explanation of the reasons for its conclusions. **If the findings of the committee support the feasibility and desirability of establishing a regional school district, its report shall contain (1) the findings of the committee with respect to the advisability of establishing a regional school district, (2) the towns to be included, (3) the grade levels for which educational programs are to be provided, (4) detailed educational and budget plans for at least a five-year period including projections of enrollments, staff needs and deployment and a description of all programs and supportive services planned for the proposed regional school district, (5) the facilities recommended, (6) estimates of the cost of land and facilities, (7) a recommendation concerning the capital contribution of each participating town based on appraisals or a negotiated valuation of existing land and facilities owned and used by each town for public elementary and secondary education which the committee recommends be acquired for use by the proposed regional school district, together with a plan for the transfer of such land and facilities, (8) a recommendation concerning the size of the board of education to serve the proposed regional school district and the representation of each town thereon, and (9) such other matters as the committee deems pertinent.** The capital contribution of each participating town shall be in the same proportion to the total purchase price or negotiated value of the property transferred as the number of pupils in average daily membership of such town as defined in [section 10-261](#) for the school year preceding that in which the plan is approved by the State Board of Education bears to the total number of such pupils in the participating towns.

§ 10-45. Referendum on establishment of regional districts or addition or withdrawal of grades

(a) Upon receipt of a copy of the certificate of approval, the committee shall set the day on which referenda shall be held simultaneously in each of the participating towns to determine whether a regional school district shall be established as recommended. Such referenda shall be held between forty-five and ninety days from the date of such approval. In the case of a recommendation from a study committee or a regional board of education to add or withdraw grades from the regional school district pursuant to the provisions of subsection (a) of [section 10-47b](#), such referenda shall be held between forty-five and ninety days from the date of such recommendation. The committee or regional board of education shall immediately notify the town clerk in each participating town of its decision. Upon receipt of such notice, the town clerk shall file the notice required by [section 9-369a](#). The warning of such referenda shall be published, the vote taken and the results thereof canvassed and declared in the same manner as is provided for the election of officers of a town. The town clerk of each participating town shall certify the results of the referendum to the State Board of Education.

(b) The vote on the question shall be taken by a “yes” and “no” vote on the voting tabulator and the designation of the question on the voting tabulator ballot shall be “Shall a regional school district be established in accordance with the plan approved by the State Board of Education on (date)?” and the ballot used shall conform with the provisions of [section 9-250](#). If the majority of the votes in each of the participating towns is affirmative, a regional school district composed of such towns is established and shall be numbered in accordance with the order of the incorporation of the districts.

(c) If the majority vote of one or more of such towns is negative, the committee or, in the case of a study committee's or a regional board of education's recommendation to add or withdraw grades from the regional school district pursuant to the provisions of subsection (a) of [section 10-47b](#), the regional board of education shall determine the advisability of immediately submitting the question to referendum a second time. If the committee or regional board of education so recommends, the committee or board shall notify the town clerk in each participating town of its decision. Within thirty days after receipt of such notice, the legislative body of the town shall meet to act upon the committee or board recommendation. If the legislative body in each of the participating towns accepts the recommendation, a second referendum shall be held in each participating town in accordance with the provisions of this section. If the majority of votes cast in each town is affirmative, the regional school district is established and numbered accordingly or grades are added to or withdrawn from the regional school district, as applicable.

Planning Process Overview

Over the past twenty years, three major trends have combined to put tremendous pressure on school governance and finance structures, structures that were conceived and built in simpler times. First is the shift among all public schools from a universal access educational model – where children make choices to pursue academic or non-academic pathways - to one dominated by the goal of universal proficiency – holding all children to high levels of academic performance measured through annual state-wide testing. With this first change comes strict accountability for all students and adults to an ever growing number of externally imposed mandates and increasingly challenging academic standards. This has created supervision and instructional challenges that require resources and change on a level very difficult to manage on a small scale.

Secondly, the costs of the labor, materials, and expenses required to staff and run a public school have increased faster than the rate of inflation over this same time period. This has created significant funding pressures with education becoming the single largest factor determining increasing taxes and town budgets.

Finally, there has been a slow but consistent decline in student enrollment with no future promise of change which has dropped the number of students in Connecticut districts to levels not seen since the end of World War II. The combined impact of these trends is an ever rising per-pupil expense coupled with challenges of small scale schooling that make it increasingly difficult for any number of Connecticut communities to maintain a consistently high quality academic program. Norfolk and Colebrook are perfect examples of all of these trends. Especially now that both Norfolk and Colebrook have confirmed rapidly declining enrollments, these concerns have led the communities to begin a serious study of these issues and to explore what potential solutions might make the most sense for both of the towns involved.

While these discussions have been going on informally for years, the momentum for a more structured process and a serious study of possible options got underway at the end of the 2011-2012 school year. Both the Norfolk and Colebrook Boards of Education had addressed the possibility on their own agendas. The Superintendents of the districts were talking administratively and in June of 2012 the local Boards of Selectman and Finance joined the conversation. As a result, a joint committee with representatives of both towns and from all three voting bodies– selectman, education and finance, came together to explore all of the facts and

ultimately make a recommendation for action back to their respective Boards and communities. That group worked for six months and recommended that a formal regionalization study committee be formed. A referendum was held in December of 2012, and both communities passed the measure and the legislative bodies set about to secure volunteers to serve on the joint Regionalization Study Committee. The following individuals were nominated and accepted these roles on behalf of their respective communities or organizations:

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Once the Regionalization Study Committee was formed, an RFP for facilitation of the regionalization planning process was issued. Two different vendors replied to the RFP for facilitation services and interviews were held and proposals reviewed by the full Committee on the night of Wednesday, May 29, 2013. Following the interviews and a brief debate, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the bid of Jonathan P. Costa, Sr. from the EDUCATION CONNECTION in Litchfield, Connecticut.

At the first organizational meeting of the Regionalization Study Committee, a work plan was established that organized the tasks required of the Committee by state statute and designated them to be completed by four sub-committees. The four Sub-Committee work-plan structure broke the work into the following areas: **A. Education and Community, B. Facilities and Transportation, C. Governance and Legal, D. Budgets and Fiscal** and identified each group's key tasks.

A. Education and Community Committee

- Grade levels included
- Proposed educational program
- Class size recommendations and configurations and associated staffing plan
- Processes and procedures for naming the new regional elementary school district
- Processes and procedures for the smooth transition to a single regional elementary school
- Development of a communications plan for disseminating the final product to the two impacted communities

B. Facilities and Transportation Sub-Committee

- Facilities recommended and any enhancements or changes that might need to be undertaken to complete the transition (architect assistance required) based on the proposed educational program and requirements
- Estimates of the cost of land and facilities including future needs for renovation/expansion of district elementary schools based on the proposed educational program and requirements

C. Governance and Legal Sub-Committee

- Recommendation concerning the size/representation of the proposed regional board of education
- Processes and procedures for addressing existing and new collective bargaining agreements
- Recommendation concerning the capital contribution of each participating town based on statutory factors

D. Budgets and Fiscal Sub-Committee

- Detailed educational and budget plans for at least a five-year period, including projections of enrollment, staff needs and deployment, transportation and special education needs, and a description of all programs and supportive service plans for the proposed district

The Regionalization Study Committee's first decision within this work plan was to make the Educational Plan work the responsibility of the entire committee. Working as a Committee of the Whole, the group spent its first three months developing and approving the educational plan for the proposed Regional School District. For the purposes of the referendum to approve a new regional district, the framework that will bind the new board occupies the next section of this report and starts on page 9. With the educational outline set, the Committee broke into three work groups to complete the remaining tasks. These groups, led by Sherri Gray (Facilities and Transportation), James Millar (Budgets and Fiscal) and Julie Scharnberg (a community volunteer who ably led the Governance and Legal Sub-Committee) set about their tasks. These groups met individually in-between the large group meetings, regularly reporting back to the entire Committee, and submitting and having their reports all approved by the Regionalization Study Committee before the end of the regularly scheduled April 2014 meeting. All of their reports address the issues required by statute and are included in this summary report. Additional supporting data are included in the Resource Appendix.

This plan has been presented to both the communities of Norfolk and Colebrook at public informational meetings and will be submitted for approval to the Connecticut State Board of Education

and the Commissioner of Education for approval in the spring of 2015. Once State Board approval is granted, a referendum will be scheduled to ask each community for final approval of the plan.

The Educational Plan

Findings: Over three months of work, the Education Committee found the following:

- Norfolk and Colebrook both have effective educational programs creating similar outcomes for students in their respective communities.
- There is a high degree of alignment between the two districts' current educational programming.
- Decreasing enrollment places significant pressures on the educational resources and programming.
- Merging the educational programs provides opportunities for sustaining and in some cases improving the educational quality available to students in both communities while at the same time providing opportunities for resource efficiencies.

Recommendations:

- The Regionalization Study Committee finds it advisable to establish a regional school district. Once formed through a combination of the Colebrook and Norfolk programs, the new regional district will initially continue most of the elements that are currently available to both individual schools reformatted in a new framework that makes appropriate use of the new class size and instructional resources that will be created by a merger of these two school districts. Once a new regional board is created, the implementation of this program will become its responsibility, to make the decisions required to fill in the details, and it is important for members of the Norfolk and Colebrook communities to recognize that this new representative regional board will have the ultimate responsibility and accountability for making the specific educational programming decisions for this newly formed district. That board will have the ability to make judgments and decisions based on its collective wisdom and experience and the best available information that it has at any given time. Accordingly, all of the following recommendations in this section are meant to address the scope and details of the potential educational program.
- To guide the new board, this regionalization plan recommends the following general educational principles be adopted. First, that a new regional elementary school that combines the Norfolk

and Colebrook Public Schools be formed and that it be housed in the current Botelle School in Norfolk (more on this in the Facilities section of this report). As described in the 2012 study report for the potential consolidation of Norfolk and Colebrook, there are enhancements to the quality of the educational/social experiences of students and teachers that will be realized simply by joining the two programs and increasing the size of the population. Increases in resources and flexibility gains made by doubling the scale of two small academic programs will allow for more choice in the potential assignments that most students might receive for a grade-level teacher. The Committee makes the following initial educational and scheduling recommendations, which may be altered in the discretion of the new regional board based on the educational and scheduling needs of the new regional district.

- The group recommends a daily allocation of 7 instructional hours and suggests, at least initially, that a modular approach (15 minute blocks) that allowed for maximum flexibility to adjust and shift according to needs was the preferred structure. Additionally, there was a consensus that one rotation for Pre-K to 2 and another for grades 3 to 6 would allow for developmental differences to be accommodated. As with all elementary programs, the suggestion is that the day be built around long blocks of time for language arts and math with a greater emphasis on science than in current programming. Social studies will continue to have some dedicated time, but will see more of its content integrated into language arts time as is appropriate with the new Common Core Standards and the focus on close reading of informational text.
- As stated earlier, this potential schedule is designed to allow for large blocks of time for Language Arts and Mathematics with the importance of science instruction at the lower elementary level elevated over the current program in either Colebrook or Norfolk. The integration of Common Core skills allows for direct instructional time and application time in all content areas. The schedule was constructed in 15 minute increments. This allows for flexibility if needed throughout the year or for specific occasions on specific days or even weeks at a time if needed.
- The recommended starting schedule for the new school is centered around the Language Arts and Mathematics blocks which are the cornerstones of an elementary schedule. The Language Arts block (or blocks if divided into two segments) consists of Reader's Workshop and Writer's Workshop. It is inclusive of grammar, word work and spelling. Writing is its own time block and is also heavily integrated into science and other content areas. Science is divided into two

blocks per week consisting of extended lab time for experiments using the inquiry method, and one block for writing up the lab and preparing for the next area of inquiry.

- In addition, the schedule allows there to be one hour per week dedicated to Science in Language Arts. Since Social Studies at this time is not a tested area and the frameworks are not yet updated, the Social Studies time remains the same as previous but because of the 15 minute increments in the schedule can be easily changed to accommodate specific projects or needs. Specials include Art, Music, Digital Learning, Physical Education/Health, World Language and Developmental Guidance. In each of these areas, there are state frameworks to guide practice. Flex time is given each week to support learners who need challenges and learners who need assistance. This approach provides for the development of a well-rounded elementary student.

Summary of Key Features of the Initial Recommended K-3 Schedule:

Core Academics:

- Language Arts time includes 1 ½ hours for Reader’s Workshop and 1 hour for Writer’s Workshop which can be one full block or broken into Reader’s and Writer’s blocks. This is 10 hours less than present, but with the additional integrated writing time in Science and increased integration across all other content areas, this time is more effectively used.
- Math will meet 1 ¼ hours per day for an increase of 19 hours per year.
- Science will meet twice per week for an increase of 14+ hours per year. This includes a lab time for actual experiments and separate time to write up the lab with hypothesis, discussion, results, and planning for the next inquiry lesson. This also includes flexible time for Social Studies or Science one time per week depending on the unit of inquiry (See asterisk in schedule). In addition, there will be one hour per week of Language Arts time devoted specifically to Science and ½ hour per week of Language Arts time devoted to Social Studies.
- Dedicated time to Social Studies remains the same as in the current program.

Specials areas:

- Music will meet twice per week for an increase of 15 hours per year.
- PE/Health will meet twice per week for increase of 4 hours per year.

- Digital Learning will meet twice per week for an increase of 13 hours per year. Information and Technology Literacy Framework to be used to incorporate library and technology skills using 21st century skills that are necessary across all areas of schooling.
- World Language will meet twice per week for an increase of 5 hours per year.
- Art will meet once per week for one hour for an increase of 13 hours per year.
- Developmental Guidance is an addition to the present schedule. This is an increase of 10 hours per year meeting every other week to work on social skills. The off week can be used for additional flex time.

Support time:

- Flex time will provide an additional 30+ hours per year for students incorporated into the school week for review, extra assistance and challenge activities.

Other considerations:

- School day is from 8:30-3:30. The first 10-15 minutes and the last 10-15 minutes of each day are for student entry, preparation for the day and for dismissal.
- Assumption of all-day Kindergarten.
- Can be a static schedule or rotating schedule. If rotating, can rotate AM block and PM block— ex. Monday--LA/AM and Math, specials/PM, Tuesday—Math, specials/AM and LA/PM.
- If rotating, specials are clustered at the middle of the LA/AM day, and beginning of the day in the Math specials/AM day. This means a schedule change each rotation day for specialists. For example, if rotation is Monday LA/AM then Tuesday LA/PM, specialists will be middle of day on Monday and beginning of day on Tuesday. See sample schedule for further clarification.
- Two or three lunch waves depending on static schedule or rotating with a 25 minute lunch and a 25 minute recess per day.

Comparison Summary of Key Features of the Initial K-3 schedule:

Content Area	Hours per year from SSP Grade 2	Future possibilities Grade 2 Static Schedule
LA	510	500
Math	231	250
Science	40	54+

Social Studies	36	36
Music	25	40
PE/Health	36	40
Digital Learning	27	40
World Language	35	40
Art	27	40
Developmental Guidance	-	10
Flex	-	30
Lunch/Recess	-	180

SAMPLE Grade Two Schedule:

GRADE TWO	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:45 - 9:00	LA	LA	LA	LA	LA
9:00 - 9:15	LA	LA	LA	LA	LA
9:15 - 9:30	LA	LA	LA	LA	LA
9:30 - 9:45	LA	LA	LA	LA	LA
9:45 - 10:00	LA	LA	LA	LA	LA
10:00-10:15	LA	LA	LA	LA	LA
10:15-10:30	LA	LA	LA	LA	LA
10:30-10:45	LA	LA	LA	LA	LA
10:45-11:00	LA	LA	LA	LA	LA
11:00-11:15	LA	LA	LA	LA	LA
11:15-11:30	MUSIC	PE	MUSIC	PE	ART
11:30-11:45	MUSIC	PE	MUSIC	PE	ART
11:45-12:00	DEV. GUID.	SS	FLEX	SCI	ART
12:00-12:15	DEV. GUID.	SS	FLEX	SCI	ART
12:15-12:30	SS	SS	FLEX	SCI	*SCI/SS
12:30-12:45	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess
12:45- 1:00	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess
1:00 - 1:15	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess
1:15 - 1:30	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess
1:30 - 1:45	MATH	MATH	MATH	MATH	MATH

1:45 - 2:00	MATH	MATH	MATH	MATH	MATH
2:00 - 2:15	MATH	MATH	MATH	MATH	MATH
2:15 - 2:30	MATH	MATH	MATH	MATH	MATH
2:30 - 2:45	MATH	MATH	MATH	MATH	MATH
2:45 - 3:00	W.L.	W.L.	SCI	DIG. LEARN.	DIG. LEARN.
3:00 - 3:15	W.L.	W.L.	SCI	DIG. LEARN.	DIG. LEARN.

Summary Key Features of the Initial Recommended 4-6 schedule:

Core Academics:

- Language Arts time includes 1 ½ hours for Reader’s Workshop and 1 hour for Writer’s Workshop which can be one full block or broken into Reader’s and Writer’s blocks. This is an increase of 70 hours per year plus the additional of the integrated writing time in Science and across all content areas.
- Math will meet 1 ¼ hours per day for an increase of 56 hours per year.
- Once an additional classroom becomes available with declining enrollment, the regional board will have an option to retain the teacher that would be lost and integrate that position as a fully dedicated science teacher. This would allow science to always be taught by the same teacher with the increased efficiencies and expertise that this would allow. When this happens, science will meet twice per week for one hour for lab time for actual experiments and ½ hour for write up with hypothesis, discussion, results, and planning the next area of inquiry. This also includes flexible time for Social Studies or Science one time per week depending on the unit of inquiry (See asterisk in schedule). In addition, there will be one hour per week of Language Arts time devoted specifically to Science (dedicated science time is 70 hours per year which is an increase over the K-3 allocation but shows as 18 hours less than current year – there is a question regarding how the SPP science and social studies time are calculated – it is possible that the actual science time is actually an increase over current practice).
- Social Studies is decreased from 89 to 40 hours per year plus integration into the Language Arts area and ½ hour per week of Language Arts time devoted to Social Studies.

Specials areas:

- Music will meet twice per week for a decrease of 10 hours per year.

- PE/Health will meet twice per week for a decrease of 3 hours per year.
- Digital Learning will meet twice per week for an increase of 7 hours per year. Information and Technology Literacy Framework to be used to incorporate library and technology skills using 21st century skills that are necessary across all areas of schooling.
- World Language will meet twice per week for an increase of 3 hours per year.
- Art will meet once per week for one hour for an increase of 11 hours per year.
- Developmental Guidance is an addition to the present schedule. This is an increase of 10 hours per year meeting every other week to work on social skills. The off week can be used for additional flex time.

Support time:

- Flex time will provide an additional 30+ hours per year for students incorporated into the school week for review, extra assistance and challenge activities.

Other considerations:

- School day is from 8:30-3:30. The first 10-15 minutes and the last 10-15 minutes of each day are for student entry, preparation for the day and for dismissal.
- Can be a static schedule or rotating schedule. If rotating, can rotate AM block and PM block—for example, Monday--LA/AM and Math, specials/PM, Tuesday—Math, specials/AM and LA/PM.
- If rotating, specials are clustered at the middle of the LA/AM day, and beginning of the day in the Math specials/AM day. This means a schedule change each rotation day for specialists. For example, if rotation is Monday LA/AM then Tuesday LA/PM, specialists will be middle of day on Monday and beginning of day on Tuesday. See sample schedule for further clarification.
- Two or three lunch waves depending on static schedule or rotating with a 25 minute lunch and a 25 minute recess per day.
- It is assumed that the new regional district will continue to purchase special education services through the Regional District 7 Shared Services model.

Comparison Summary of Key Features of the Initial 4-6 schedule:

Content Area	Hours per year From SSP Grade 2	Future possibilities Grade 2 Static Schedule
LA	510	500
Math	231	250
Science	40	54+
Social Studies	36	36
Music	25	40
PE/Health	36	40
Digital Learning	27	40
World Language	35	40
Art	27	40
Developmental Guidance	-	10
Flex	-	30
Lunch/Recess	-	180

SAMPLE Grade Five Schedule:

GRADE FIVE	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:45 - 9:00	MATH	MATH	MATH	MATH	MATH
9:00 - 9:15	MATH	MATH	MATH	MATH	MATH
9:15 - 9:30	MATH	MATH	MATH	MATH	MATH
9:30 - 9:45	MATH	MATH	MATH	MATH	MATH
9:45 - 10:00	MATH	MATH	MATH	MATH	MATH
10:00-10:15	LA READ.	LA READ.	LA READ.	LA READ.	LA READ.
10:15-10:30	LA READ.	LA READ.	LA READ.	LA READ.	LA READ.
10:30-10:45	LA READ.	LA READ.	LA READ.	LA READ.	LA READ.
10:45-11:00	LA READ.	LA READ.	LA READ.	LA READ.	LA READ.
11:00-11:15	LA READ.	LA READ.	LA READ.	LA READ.	LA READ.
11:15-11:30	LA READ.	LA READ.	LA READ.	LA READ.	LA READ.
11:30-11:45	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess
11:45-12:00	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess
12:00-12:15	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess
12:15-12:30	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess
12:30-12:45	MUSIC	PE	MUSIC	PE	ART
12:45- 1:00	MUSIC	PE	MUSIC	PE	ART
1:00 - 1:15	SCI	SCI	DIG. LEARN.	DIG. LEARN.	ART
1:15 - 1:30	SCI	SCI	DIG. LEARN.	DIG. LEARN.	ART
1:30 - 1:45	DEV. GUID.	SCI	W.L.	W.L	FLEX
1:45 - 2:00	DEV. GUID.	SCI	W.L.	W.L	FLEX
2:00 - 2:15	SS	*SCI/SS	SS	SS	FLEX
2:15 - 2:30	LA WRITING	LA WRITING	LA WRITING	LA WRITING	LA WRITING
2:30 - 2:45	LA WRITING	LA WRITING	LA WRITING	LA WRITING	LA WRITING
2:45 - 3:00	LA WRITING	LA WRITING	LA WRITING	LA WRITING	LA WRITING
3:00 - 3:15	LA WRITING	LA WRITING	LA WRITING	LA WRITING	LA WRITING

**Initial Full Time Equivalents for Specialist Areas
(for budgeting purposes)**

Content Area	Static Schedule	Rotating Schedule
Digital Learning	.5 or .6	.4 or .5
Science	.8 or .9	.9
World Language	.5 or .6	.4 or .5
PE	.5 or .6	.4 or .5
Art	.5 or .6	.4 or .5
Music	.5 or .6	.4 or .5
Developmental Guidance (alternating weeks)	.2 (teaching only)	.2 (teaching only)

The recommended program will meet all of the current state requirements for elementary education that are currently being addressed through the existing Norfolk and Colebrook educational programs and will adjust like any other public school as those requirements change. It is the belief of the Education Committee that the schedules and time allocations referenced here are important but not substantive as defined in the statute and that the new regional board could decide to adjust these allocations and programs within the Pre-K to 6 structure without requiring an additional referendum in both communities. Additionally, such schedules and time allocations are initial schedules and time allocations only, such that they may be changed as the needs of the regional district change.

Facilities and Transportation

The Facilities Sub-Committee was officially formed in November, 2013 for the purpose of assessing the physical plant of the Botelle School and to study its capability to accommodate the influx of students from Colebrook Consolidated School and house the new regional school district. The sub-committee met nine times and used the professional services of architect James Lawler, and Mrs. Leslie Sheldon, Transportation Director of All Star Bus Transportation Company to assist them in their charge.

Findings:

- The Botelle School, located in Norfolk, would be the desired site to host the proposed educational program and its associated administrative supports.

- After a close review of the student enrollment projections provided to both Colebrook and Norfolk by Dr. Peter Prowda (pages 5-6 Resources Appendix) the sub-committee found that, at this time and through the time of those projections, the Botelle School can accommodate both student bodies with only minor renovations and some easy to accomplish accommodations within the school (a map that numbers each identified classroom space can be found on pages 3-4 of the Resources Appendix).
- If the enrollment figures hold true, a classroom would become available in the near future, thereby allowing a classroom for a supportive program.
- The current media center could be converted into two regular classroom spaces if they are needed.
- The local Fire Marshall has provided state and local fire code clearance for the large spaces within Botelle i.e.; cafeteria, gym and classrooms for the predicted student capacities.
- The Botelle School was considered to be in excellent condition with no major capital costs necessary to prepare it to meet the needs of an larger student body.
 - Roof (main building) done in 2001 with a 25 year warranty
 - Roof (gym section) done in 1993 with a 20 year warranty
- There is adequate storage space. The Colebrook Consolidated School would retain any materials, equipment, furniture, etc. not needed at Botelle. In addition, storage containers could be used at Botelle if needed for cold storage. Possible location of storage containers in the Skating Rink.
- A contingency plan of having an AM/PM Pre-K session was agreed to if the Pre-K numbers exceed 20.
- The space available in the Botelle Cafeteria is adequate for a school of 200+ students. Equipment seems adequate.
- The auditorium will still be available for regional school assemblies and Norfolk town meetings.
- Pull out programs for music instruction will more than likely take place in this auditorium space.
- The gymnasium and playground are more than adequate for physical education classes and recess.

Recommendations:

- That the Botelle School be the facility to house the proposed new district and recommended educational program.
- That a classroom be provided in the plan for Pre-K students; a program currently not provided for Colebrook residents at the Colebrook Consolidated School.
- That all special and supportive programs be assigned available spaces by the school administration in order to provide the priority to the classroom teachers.
- If needed, that the current Botelle Media Room (Computer Center) be disassembled and designated as two regular classrooms or other such rooms as determined by the regional school district until such time as this space is planned to be used in a different way, with a new interior wall constructed at an estimated cost of \$25,000.
- The new Board consider adding another freezer to provide additional food storage capacity. Approximate cost of \$2,500.

Transportation

The sub-committee met with Mrs. Leslie Sheldon of All Star Bus Company to review the issues regarding student bus transportation.

Transportation Findings:

- Both existing bus contracts end as of June 15, 2015. Contracts for transportation will go out to bid at that time.
- A new regional school would not initially require more than the seven buses being used in both towns currently but a better per bus price could be negotiated if all routes were combined.
- There is little that can be done to overcome geography. Currently there are students in both towns on a 55 minute run.
- The Whalen Bus Co. will end its school bus service as of June 30, 2015.
- At this time, the lower driveway at Botelle appears to provide the best drop off and pick up area for the students.
- At this time, it appears that the upper parking lot would be adequate for employee parking.

Transportation Recommendations:

- That the new board strive to create transportation schedules that assure no student will be on the bus under normal conditions longer than the current 60 minute guideline.
- That current routes in both towns be reconfigured after it is determined where all the students who attend the new district live and route efficiencies can be determined.
- A more comprehensive computerized bus schedule should be determined once the referendum passes.
- At least initially, a Pre-K mid-day bus run will be necessary.
- School starting and ending time be pushed back (later) in order to allow longer routes as determined by the regional board.
- At least initially, the current policy of picking up students at the end of the driveway or front of the house continue.
- Norfolk and Colebrook buses will be garaged in their respective towns.

Governance and Legal

The most important decision of this sub-committee is the size and representative nature of the new proposed Regional Board of Education. On matters of collective bargaining, attorney Fred Dorsey from the firm of Kainen, Escalera and McHale, PC was engaged for guidance.

Findings:

- The group researched all of the existing regional school governance models in an effort to frame the issue for the new regional board.
- To ensure that weighted voting is not perceived by either community to unfairly create an undue influence in one community over another, it was determined that the mechanism of cross-over voting can be an effective tool. A cross-over provision requires that in order for certain items to be adopted by the board, there must be a majority vote with at least one member from each town voting in the affirmative.
- With respect to existing collective bargaining agreements, Counselor Dorsey advised that: “the Local Boards have no obligation to bargain over the decision to regionalize educational services,

but do have impact bargaining obligations should regionalization occur. Many of the impact issues, such as layoff clauses, are already contained in collective bargaining agreements and need not be renegotiated. The responsibility to negotiate will not, however, transfer to the new Regional Board until such time as the Regional Board actually assumes control of the new system and employs the workforce. During the transition, the Local Boards will have to continue to bargain any contracts due for negotiations under the MERA or TNA. Short contracts or contract extensions should be considered for such transitional bargaining, but the importance of wage and health insurance provisions should not be overlooked during these negotiations.”

- The present statutory factors include a requirement to equalize the assets and liabilities that each town contributes to the new region, and assumes that each town will contribute a significant asset, e.g., their town’s school building.

Recommendations:

- That the new regional board should be comprised of four (4) members from the Town of Colebrook and four (4) members from the Town of Norfolk.
- That voting on the board shall be weighted. The weight assigned to each town should be set initially based on the reported population of each town in the 2010 Federal census. Thereafter, the weighting should be reviewed and reset based on the population of each town as reported by subsequent decennial Federal censuses.
- That a cross-over voting provision be employed whenever there is a vote regarding:
 - A hiring decision for a Principal or Superintendent
 - Capital improvements exceeding \$10,000
 - Recommendations for annual budgets
 - Adoption or change of Board by-laws
 - Adoption or change of Board policies
 - Changes or additions to lease, bonding, or collective bargaining obligations.
- That a quorum for a Board meeting require the presence of no less than six (6) board members in order to transact business.
- That final by-laws of the new regional board should contain an explicit code of ethics. The code of ethics should include, at a minimum, the following principles:

- *I will be a staunch advocate of high quality free public education for all Connecticut children. In fulfilling my responsibilities, I will think of “children first.”*
 - *I will work unremittingly to help my community understand the importance of proper support for public education, whether it be in providing adequate finances, optimum facilities, staffing and resources, or better educational programs for children.*
 - *I will insist that all school business transactions be open and ethical.*
- The newly formed region should lease Botelle School from the Town of Norfolk on a triple net basis for a nominal annual amount. Triple net means that all costs of operating and maintaining the facility should be borne by the regional board. While not yet final, proposed lease terms will include:
 - An initial term of 25 years
 - Escape Clause by Statute
 - Rent: \$1.00 annually
 - Liability Insurance to be carried by Regional Board of Education and carrier is to be the same carrier used by the Town of Norfolk. Current carrier is CIRMA.
 - The Lessee will be responsible for all maintenance, repairs, renovations and capital improvements.
 - The Regional Board shall include in their annual budget an amount no less than \$100,000 for Capital and Non-recurring Expenditures pursuant to CGS 10-51 (d) (2).
 - Building Committee to be formed for Capital and major repairs or renovations as follows:
 - Committee to be formed by Board of Selectmen in each town.
 - Committee will consist of six (6) members with four (4) votes needed for approval of any projects. Members will be as follows: two (2) members of the Regional Board of Education, two (2) members from Colebrook and two (2) members from Norfolk. Four (4) members should have knowledge of construction practices.

- Any recommendation from the Building Committee will be presented and approved by the Regional Board of Education and the Norfolk Board of Selectmen as property owners.
- Given that there would be no transfer of property into the newly formed regional district, there should be no equalization of assets and liabilities, and therefore no capital contribution. However, the Town of Colebrook should underwrite the conversion costs associated with accommodating the additional students, not to exceed \$50,000.
- That the following wording, required by statute, be used for the proposed referendum:

“Shall a regional school district be established in accordance with the plan approved by the State Board of Education on (date)?”

Yes _____ *No* _____

Budget and Fiscal

The Fiscal Subcommittee’s principal task was to produce a 10 year financial forecast for each town and a pro-forma for the new regional district. The forecast period is assumed to begin with the 2016-17 school year and run through 2025-26. The subcommittee also considered one-time transition costs. The principal findings and recommendations are summarized below, followed by a note on the forecast methodology.

Budget and Fiscal Findings:

- Norfolk and Colebrook are small, rural towns with similar demographics. Their per capita incomes are fairly close to the state average of \$37,892. Because of their small enrollment, both have high costs per student compared to the state average of \$14,505. While Norfolk has a cost per student of \$18,243 and Colebrook has a cost per student of \$15,393, Barkhamsted, by contrast, with its larger K-6 enrollment of 338, has a cost per student of only \$12,725.

	<u>Norfolk</u>	<u>Colebrook</u>
Population	1,678	1,457
Per Capita Income	\$41,176	\$37,227
Cost Per Student	\$18,243	\$15,393

Source: OPM Municipal Fiscal Indicators, January 2015.

- K-6 enrollment has declined almost 20% since 2009-10 and is expected to decline another 16% by 2024-25.

	<u>K-6 Enrollment</u>			
	<u>2009-10</u>	<u>2014-15</u>	<u>2019-20</u>	<u>2024-25</u>
Norfolk	121	102	82	84
Colebrook	<u>119</u>	<u>91</u>	<u>79</u>	<u>78</u>
Total	240	193	160	162

Source: Peter M. Prowda, March 18, 2015.

- By combining, the two schools will save 8.1% in the first year, rising to a predicted 14.1% in the tenth year. The aggregate dollar savings over the ten year period is expected to approximate \$6.2 million. The initial savings assume no reduction in teaching staff and include certain town-provided services in the combined budget – snow plowing, for example – that are not included in the individual budgets. The additional savings in subsequent years are expected as the result of declining enrollment, which permits several grades to consolidate from two sections into one, requiring fewer teachers.

	<u>2016-17</u>	<u>2020-21</u>	<u>2025-26</u>
Norfolk “As Is”	\$2,637,523	\$2,826,744	\$3,023,851
Colebrook “As Is”	<u>\$1,943,083</u>	<u>\$2,109,386</u>	<u>\$2,268,887</u>
Total	\$4,580,606	\$4,936,130	\$5,292,738
Pro Forma Combined	\$4,211,254	\$4,243,952	\$4,547,532
Savings vs. “As Is”	\$369,352	\$692,178	\$745,207

- Legislative relief from the minimum budget requirement, CGS 10-262i, is required, because the initial savings of 8.1% mean that each town will spend less on education than it did the year before. Additional violations may occur in subsequent years, if declining enrollment permits several grades to consolidate from two sections into one, as expected.
- When the pro forma budget is allocated by enrollment in, accordance with CGS 10-51(b), all of the savings accrue to Norfolk during the first five years. This occurs because Colebrook’s initial cost per student is 18% lower than Norfolk’s – twice the initial savings. Even though the situation will improve somewhat during the second five years, an alternative method of allocating the budget will be necessary if each town is to share proportionally in the savings.

	<u>Norfolk</u>	<u>Colebrook</u>
First Five years 2016-21:		
Average Enrollment Share	51.5%	48.5%
<i>Total Savings vs. "As Is"</i>	\$2,767,857	(\$161,110)
Second Five Years 2021-26:		
Average Enrollment Share	51.4%	48.6%
<i>Total Savings vs. "As Is"</i>	\$3,354,711	\$264,146

- There is likely to be a series of one-time transition costs required to support the transition from two districts to one. These costs will occur before the new board is able to pass a regular operating budget. They include such items as moving expense, attorneys’ fees, transition planning, building renovations, and interim staff. There may be additional one-time expenses, such as severance, that will be part of the new district’s regular budget. Transition costs are difficult to estimate, but will likely be in the range of \$80,000 to \$100,000, as detailed in the appendices.

Budget and Fiscal Recommendations:

- To solve the challenge of equalizing the cost per pupil while still allowing both communities to save money, the subcommittee recommends that the pro-forma regional budget be allocated 57.4% to Norfolk and 42.6% to Colebrook during the first five years of combined operation. These percentages represent each town’s share of the average “as is” budget during the first five years of the forecast. By this method, each town will save approximately 11% over the cost of remaining independent during the first five years. Then, during the second five years, the regional board will adjust the allocation annually to return to the statutory, enrollment-based allocation by year 10.

	<u>Norfolk</u>	<u>Colebrook</u>
First Five years 2016-21:		
Average “As Is” Share	57.4%	42.6%
<i>Total Savings vs. "As Is"</i>	\$1,506,810	\$1,099,936
Second Five Years 2021-26:		
Average Transition Share	54.1%	45.9%
<i>Total Savings vs. "As Is"</i>	\$2,760,656	\$858,201

- To ensure that the new regional board will have flexibility in event that the extent or timing of the enrollment decline differs from forecast, the subcommittee recommends that a special act of the Connecticut Legislature be submitted to obtain a 10 year exemption from CGS 10-242i and CGS 10-51(b). Such an exemption will also permit a more orderly transition to the enrollment-based allocation during the second five years of the forecast period.
- Finally, the subcommittee recommends that a one-time transition budget of \$80,000 to \$100,000 be provided for the new regional board to cover expenses prior to the passage of its first regular operating budget.

Forecast Methodology:

The forecast process begins with the 2014-15 budgets approved by each town. Several changes are made to these budgets to reconcile staff changes that occurred after the budgets were approved; that is, to ensure that the starting point of the forecast is the actual 2014-15 staffing. The pro-forma budget assumes that all children attend the Botelle School and that program offerings are those described in the earlier sections of this report. It further assumes the elimination of administrative duplication and other expenditures that are no longer necessary – for example, utilities at the Colebrook School. Some expenses increase – for example, the equalization of pay scales and addition of pre-K staff. Each of these changes is described in the appendices.

The forecast itself uses four types of assumptions: (i) teacher salaries assume that the 2014-15 staff remain in place and advance in seniority under the step structure of the current Norfolk contract, which is inflated by 1% a year; (ii) non-certified salary expense is inflated by 2% a year; (iii) benefits are a flat percentage of salaries; and (iv) most other line items are based on historical averages. The enrollment projections made in 2013 and then updated in 2015 by Peter Prowda are also used. Initially, there are two sections of each K-6 grade, but declining enrollment allows some sections to be combined beginning in 2021-22.

The projections are illustrated in the table on page 31. It is critical to note that the table and data are placed here in this report to illustrate how the supporting assumptions and projections impact the budget forecast. These data ARE NOT meant to be considered as commitments to staffing, promises of employment or any other binding plan – they are included only as reference points to explain how the budget assumptions were arrived at. Staffing decisions ultimately must be made by the new Regional

Board of Education based on the actual information (a combination of enrollment, budget, and educational factors) available to them on an annual basis.

A similar process was followed to create an individual forecast for each town, based on the assumption that a combination does not occur. Care was taken to use similar assumptions in each of the three forecasts so that the bias inherent in any set of assumptions will affect the two towns and the pro-forma combination as equally as possible.

The actual cost of operating the two schools, whether alone or in combination, will undoubtedly diverge from these forecasts. However, the subcommittee firmly believes that a combination will offer significantly lower the costs to each town. All of the supporting data projections that serve as the foundation for this budget can be found in the appendices.

Norfolk/Colebrook Combined												
	Births		Grade Level Enrollment								K-6 (excl PreK)	
Year	Year	Number	PreK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	Enrolled	Teachers
2004-05	1999	38	11	35	30	35	45	42	30	43	260	
2005-06	2000	32	23	27	40	34	34	48	41	27	251	
2006-07	2001	29	17	42	30	40	39	33	51	43	278	
2007-08	2002	25	8	32	41	34	43	37	38	53	278	
2008-09	2003	21	10	27	27	44	34	45	38	45	260	
2009-10	2004	32	16	30	24	28	47	31	42	38	240	
2010-11	2005	22	18	29	27	28	28	47	30	39	228	
2011-12	2006	21	11	28	23	30	26	26	45	28	206	
2012-13	2007	29	8	32	28	22	32	27	26	45	212	14
2013-14	2008	15	14	26	29	29	22	32	29	30	197	14
2014-15	2009	21	13	26	22	29	29	24	34	29	193	14
Projected												
2015-16	2009	22	13	24	25	22	30	31	25	36	193	14
2016-17	2010	12	13	20	23	25	23	31	33	27	182	14
2017-18	2011	14	13	21	19	23	26	25	33	35	182	14
2018-19	2012	19	13	23	20	19	24	27	27	35	175	13
2019-20	2013	11	13	18	21	20	19	26	28	29	161	11
2020-21	2014	18	13	26	17	21	21	20	27	30	162	10
2021-22	2015	16	13	24	24	17	21	22	20	29	157	10
2022-23	2016	17	13	25	22	24	17	23	23	22	156	10
2023-24	2017	17	13	24	23	22	25	18	24	25	161	11
2024-25	2018	17	13	24	22	23	23	26	18	26	162	11

Notes: 1. Yellow highlight indicates single section based on recommended class size.
2. Orange highlight indicates single section in forecast, even though guideline for class size is exceeded.
3. Recommended class size: K-1 = 18; 2-3 = 22; 4-6 = 24.

Source: Peter M. Prowda, March 18, 2015

**Norfolk/Colebrook Study Committee
Summary of Forecast Savings**

	1st Year 2016-17	Last Year 2025-26	1st 5 Years 2016-21	2nd 5 Years 2021-26	10 Years 2016-26
1. Town Budgets "As Is"					
Norfolk "As Is"	2,637,523	3,023,851			
Colebrook "As Is"	1,943,083	2,268,887			
Combined "As Is" Budget	4,580,606	5,292,738			
2. Pro Forma Budget					
	4,211,254	4,547,532			
3. Pro Forma vs "As Is"					
Dollar Savings	369,352	745,207	2,606,746	3,618,857	6,225,604
Percentage Savings	8.1%	14.1%	10.9%	14.0%	12.5%
4. Budget Allocation					
Norfolk Share Pro Forma	57.4%	51.9%	57.4%	54.1%	55.7%
Colebrook Share Pro Forma	42.6%	48.1%	42.6%	45.9%	44.3%
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Norfolk	2,417,260	2,357,979			
Colebrook	1,793,994	2,189,552			
Total Pro Forma	4,211,254	4,547,532			
Norfolk Savings vs "As Is"	220,263	665,872	1,506,810	2,760,656	4,267,466
Colebrook Savings vs "As Is"	149,089	79,335	1,099,936	858,201	1,958,137
Total Savings vs "As Is"	369,352	745,207	2,606,746	3,618,857	6,225,604
Norfolk Savings % "As Is"	8.4%	22.0%	11.0%	27.6%	14.8%
Colebrook Savings % "As Is"	7.7%	3.5%	10.8%	7.8%	9.3%
5. Enrollment (Excludes Pre-K)					
Norfolk	95	84			
Colebrook	87	78			
Total	182	162			
Norfolk % Total	52.2%	51.9%			
Colebrook % Total	47.8%	48.1%			
Total	100.0%	100.0%			

Notes:

1. The pro forma forecast includes the cost of town-provided services, but not new programs or pre-existing debt service.
2. The first 5 years of the pro forma budget are allocated according to each town's average share of the combined "as is" budget. Those shares are Norfolk 57.4% and Colebrook 42.6%.
3. During the second 5 years of the pro forma budget, each town's share of the budget is adjusted annually until it equals share of total enrollment in 2024-25.
4. Enrollment projects through 2024-25 were provided by Peter M. Prowda. The projection for 2025-26 is assumed to be the same as 2024-25.

Transition Planning

Assuming that this report is accepted and the referenda are successful, the Regionalization Study Committee will be dissolved and, according to statute, a new regional board will be created within 30 days. It will be that board's responsibility to implement the recommendations or follow the guidelines contained in this report. As some of the Study Committee's members may eventually serve on the new regional board, there may be some continuity of knowledge and experience between the two groups. If that does not occur, members of the Study Committee could certainly serve as a resource to the new board during the time of transition. Among the tasks anticipated in the transitional period:

- Recruiting volunteers from the schools and community to help with the planning of key transition issues.
- Setting a transitional calendar which includes moving, meeting, and key transition dates.
- Determining naming conventions.
- Scheduling informational and planning meetings.
- Creating a Faculty Transition Committee that would include members of the staff of both current schools to help organize and focus the transition in a way that would reflect the concerns and needs of the professional staff who will be most impacted by this change.

Terms and Definitions

Class size – how many children are assigned to each grade-level teacher for the year in general education instruction.

Common Core State Standards – the globally benchmarked academic standards in language arts and math that the Connecticut State Board of Education endorsed as Connecticut’s official academic standards in July of 2010 (joining 43 other states that had done the same). These standards are more rigorous than Connecticut’s previous standards and will require extensive curriculum and instruction adjustments to help students achieve proficiency.

Curriculum and instructional alignment – degree to which the materials and teaching used to educate students are focused on the same things from year to year and school to school. With both communities mostly sending students to the same middle and high school, this alignment has an impact on the preparation of students for academics beyond elementary school.

FTE – Full-time employee. For budgeting purposes, the report takes an average predicted cost per employee based on history as a foundation for making estimates on staff costs and/or savings over-time.

ECS impact – Educational Cost Sharing – the degree to which the state of Connecticut will subsidize the per-pupil expense of educating children in your community.

Equality of opportunity - the equality of opportunity for advancement and learning from student to student of the various classroom arrangements that are possible given the combination of enrollment, staff, budget, and facility.

Logistics, management and transportation – the associated costs of doing the educational business (beyond the professional staff) – running the buildings, constructing budgets, making the busses run on time, etc.

Maximum class size – the number of children that each local Board of Education has set as the most it would like to see in any given classroom at any given level. In both communities these numbers are considered recommendations and do not carry the weight of policy or regulation.

MERA - Municipal Employees Relations Act.

Non-tested – all subjects taught that are NOT assessed through a standardized, state-wide test (usually math, writing, and reading are considered tested areas).

Per-pupil expenditure (CSDE adjusted) – the total education budget for the community divided by the number of students served by that same budget, MINUS transportation, bonding, special education outplacement, and certain building costs).

Per-pupil expenditure (raw) – the total education budget for the community divided by the number of students served by that same budget.

Pro Forma – literally means “as a matter of form” and is a term used to say that this is our best prediction based on the historical information we have. If the next 5 years behaves like the last 5 years, this is what we believe will occur.

Reform Bill 458 (PA12-116)– the educational reform legislation passed in Connecticut in May of 2012 that creates new expectations for testing, teacher evaluation, professional learning, supervisory practices, certification, and a variety of other new educational mandates.

Regionalization – the legal process involving two specific community votes (study/approval) in which two or more communities decide to formally merge the operations of their schools into a wholly new legal entity. This new entity has both governance and fiscal authority in the running of the newly organized school district.

Representation – the degree to which a community has a say in the way its children are educated and its resources are allocated.

Smarter Balance Assessment Consortia – a 36 state consortia that has committed to a new generation of tests that gauge student’s ability to meet the new Common Core State Standards.

Stability and flexibility balance – achieving a balance between the ability to change things so the system is responsive with the need for stability so people can plan for the long-term solutions needed to make the most out of resources and materials.

Specials – for budgetary purposes, the designation of music, art, computer, physical education and world language instruction at the elementary level.

Special education obligations/support services – those educational services that are required and provided to students with special education designations as directed by federal and state law.

SSP – Strategic School Profile (this is the annual document that the Connecticut State Department of Education publishes with information and data regarding each district).

Supervisory practices – the way in which the principal is able to oversee and develop the teachers within a school.

Timeline – how long will it take to plan and implement the desired change.

TNA - Teachers Negotiations Act.

Transitional burden – how much effort will be required to transition from the current arrangement in the two towns to whatever arrangement is desired.